

## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An electronic document provided with a status identifier for identifying an approval status of at least one section of said electronic document, said status identifier having a first state indicating that the at least one section of the electronic document is as approved by an approving user, a second state indicating that modifications have been made to the at least one section of the electronic document as approved by said approving user, and a third state indicating that modifications have been made to the at least one section of the electronic document as approved by the approving user, but that a modifying user has taken responsibility for said modifications.

2. An electronic document according to claim 1, wherein said status identifier has a fourth state indicating that it is unknown if the at least one section of the electronic document is as approved by the approving user.

3. An electronic document according to claim 1, wherein, in said third state of the status identifier, the modifying user is different from the approving user.

4. An electronic document according to claim 1, wherein, in said third state of the status identifier, the modifying user is the same as the approving user.

5. An electronic document according to claim 1, wherein the third state of the status identifier further indicates an identity of said modifying user.

6. An electronic document according to claim 1, wherein said status identifier is integrated to said electronic document.

7. An electronic document according to claim 1, wherein said at least one section of the electronic document includes the entire electronic document.

8. An electronic document provided with a plurality of status identifiers as claimed in claim 1, each of said status identifiers being associated with a different section of said electronic document.

5 9. An electronic document provided with a plurality of status identifiers as claimed in claim 1, each of said status identifiers being associated with a different approving user.

10 10. In combination with a document approval system for the approval of an electronic document by at least one user, a status identifier for identifying an approval status of at least one section of said electronic document, said status identifier having a first state indicating that the at least one section of the electronic document is as approved by an approving user, a second state indicating that modifications have been made to the at least one section of the electronic document as approved by said approving user, and a third state indicating that modifications have been made to the at least one section of the electronic document as approved by the approving user but that a modifying user has taken responsibility for said modifications.

20 11. A combination according to claim 10, wherein, in said third state of the status identifier, the modifying is different from the approving user.

12. A combination according to claim 10, wherein, in said third state of the status identifier, the modifying is the same as the approving user.

25

13. A combination according to claim 10, wherein said status identifier is integrated to said electronic document.

30 14. A combination according to claim 10, wherein said status identifier has a fourth state indicating that it is unknown if the at least one section of the electronic document is as approved by the approving user.

105020740600

15. A combination according to claim 10, wherein said at least one section of the electronic document includes the entire electronic document.

5 16. In combination with a document approval system for the approval of an electronic document by at least one user, a status identifier for identifying an approval status of at least one section of said electronic document, said status identifier having a first state indicating that the at least one section of the electronic document is as approved by an approving user, a second state indicating that  
10 modifications have been made to the at least one section of the electronic document as approved by said approving user, and a third state indicating that it is unknown if the at least one section of the electronic document is as approved by the approving user, said third state of the status identifier being used for storage of the electronic document.

15 17. In a document approval system for the approval of an electronic document by at least one user, said system comprising a status identifier for identifying an approval status of at least one section of said electronic document, said status identifier having a first state indicating that the at least one section of the electronic document is as approved by an approving user and a second state indicating that  
20 modifications have been made to the at least one section of the electronic document as approved by the approving user, the improvement wherein said status identifier has a third state indicating that modifications have been made to the at least one section of the electronic document as approved by the approving user but that a modifying user has taken responsibility for said modifications.

25 18. An improved document approval system according to claim 17 wherein, in said third state of the status identifier, the modifying user is different from the approving user.

19. An improved document approval system according to claim 17, wherein, in said third state of the status identifier, the modifying user is the same as the approving user.

5 20. An improved document approval system according to claim 17, wherein said status identifier is integrated to said electronic document.

21. An improved document approval system according to claim 17, wherein said status identifier has a fourth state indicating that it is unknown if the at least one  
10 section of the electronic document is as approved by the approving user.

22. An improved document approval system according to claim 17, wherein said at least one section of the electronic document includes the entire electronic document.

15

23. In a document approval system for the approval of an electronic document, said system comprising a plurality of status identifiers for identifying an approval status of at least one section of said electronic document by a plurality of identifying users, each of said status identifiers having a first state indicating that  
20 the at least one section of the electronic document is as approved by an approving user and a second state indicating that modifications have been made to the at least one section of the electronic document as approved by the approving user, the improvement wherein each of said status identifiers has a third state indicating that modifications have been made to the at least one section of the electronic  
25 document as approved by the approving user but that a modifying user has taken responsibility for said modifications.

24. In a document approval system for the approval of an electronic document by at least one user, said system comprising a status identifier for identifying an approval status of at least one section of said electronic document, said status  
30 identifier having a first state indicating that the at least one section of the electronic

5